TOMB OF DRACULA

MARVEL COMICS GROUP™

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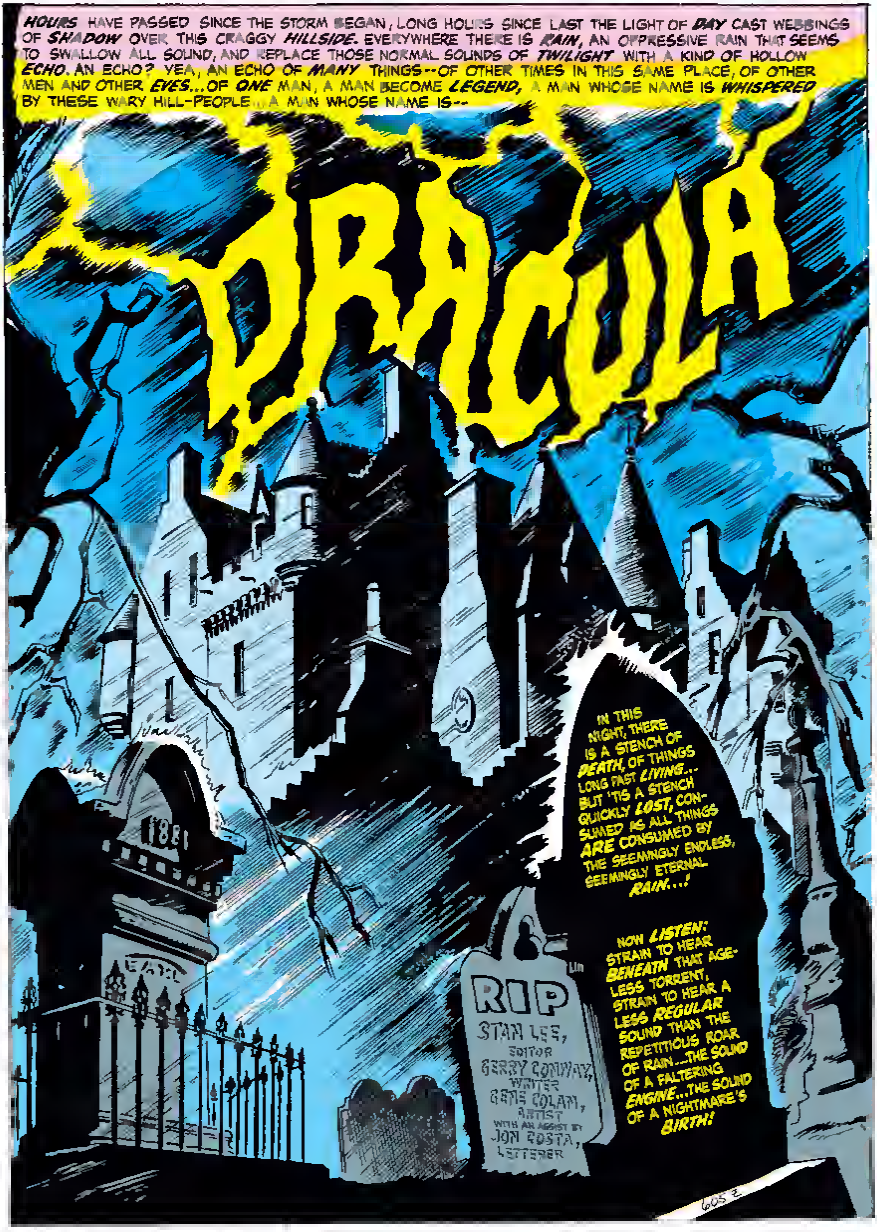
DRACULA LIVES!

THE TOMB OF DRACULA™

APPROVED BY THE COMICS CODE AUTHORITY

NIGHT OF THE VAMPIRE!


HOURS HAVE PASSED SINCE THE STORM BEGAN, LONG HOURS SINCE LAST THE LIGHT OF DAY CAST WEBBINGS OF SHADOW OVER THIS CRAGGY HILLSIDE. EVERYWHERE THERE IS RAIN, AN OPPRESSIVE RAIN THAT SEEMS TO SWALLOW ALL SOUND, AND REPLACE THOSE NORMAL SOUNDS OF TWILIGHT WITH A KIND OF HOLLOW ECHO. AN ECHO? YEA, AN ECHO OF MANY THINGS--OF OTHER TIMES IN THIS SAME PLACE, OF OTHER MEN AND OTHER EYES...OF ONE MAN, A MAN BECOME LEGEND, A MAN WHOSE NAME IS WHISPERED BY THESE WARY HILL-PEOPLE...A MAN WHOSE NAME IS--
DRACULA
IN THIS NIGHT, THERE IS A STENCH OF DEATH, OF THINGS LONG PAST LIVING... BUT 'TIS A STENCH QUICKLY LOST, CONSUMED IS ALL THINGS ARE CONSUMED BY THE SEEMINGLY ENDLESS, SEEMINGLY ETERNAL RAIN...!
NOW LISTEN: STRAIN TO HEAR BENEATH THAT AGELESS TORRENT, STRAIN TO HEAR A LESS REGULAR SOUND THAN THE REPETITIOUS ROAR OF RAIN...THE SOUND OF A FALTERING ENGINE...THE SOUND OF A NIGHTMARE'S BIRTH!
RIP
STAN LEE, EDITOR
GERRY CONWAY, WRITER
GENE COLAN, ARTIST
WITH AN ASSIST BY JON ROSTA, LETTERER
605 2

TIME HAS *DEPARTED* THIS SCENE WASHED FROM TIRED MINDS BY THE ENDLESS *PATTERING* UPON THE JEEP'S CANVAS *ROOF*. FOR THE THREE OF THEM, THERE'S ONLY *GRAY*--FORMLESS, MOVING *GRAY*.

PLEASE, FRANK--WE'D BETTER STOP SOMEWHERE, ASK *DIRECTIONS*.

IT'S BEEN *HOURS* SINCE WE LEFT THE AIRPORT. I DON'T...

BUT I *DO*, CLIFTON. YOU'LL JUST HAVE TO *TRUST* ME.

SOMEHOW...I KNOW THIS ROAD... KNOW I *CAN'T* GET *LOST*.

THE CASTLE'S UP *AHEAD*. A MILE...IT CAN'T BE *MORE*.

OURS IS A *PRIVILEGE*... THE PRIVILEGE OF WATCHING FATE'S *MACHINATIONS*...

FRANKIE! THE *CAR*...!

SOME SORT OF *DITCH* AHEAD--CAN'T *AVOID* IT--!

LOOK OUT!

KRRUNCH

FINE, JUST *FINE*. SO MUCH FOR RENTED *JEEPS*.

WE'LL HAVE TO WALK *BACK* A WAYS--TO THAT *VILLAGE* WE PASSED.

THINK YOU CAN *MAKE IT*, JEANIE?

YE-*YES*, FRANKIE...

FRANK DRAKE GROWS *SILENT*, CONSIDERING THE TWISTS AND CURVES OF DESTINY THAT HAVE *BROUGHT* HIM TO THIS MOUNTAIN ROAD TO THIS TINY COUNTRY. FINALLY, HE *SIGHS*, AND BEGINS TO *MOVE*.

WHILE YOU'RE IN A *PLANNING* MOOD, FRANK--

ARE THERE ANY *OTHER* DETOURS THE REST OF US SHOULD KNOW ABOUT?

YOU BEIN' SO FAMILIAR WITH THE *ROAD* AND ALL?

CUT IT, CLIFTON.

THIS MAY BE *YOUR* IDEA--BUT IT'S NOT YOUR *SHOW*.

I MAKE THE COMMENTS AND CRITICISMS... *UNDERSTAND*?

SURE, FRANK, *SURE*. YOU'RE THE *BRAIN BOY* IN THIS TEAM-UP, RIGHT?

YEAH... YOU'RE THE ONE WHO WANTED TO *SELL* THE BLASTED *CASTLE*, REMEMBER? YEAH, REAL *BRIGHT*, FRANKIE-BOY.

DON'T LET ME SLOW YOU *DOWN*, LOVER-MAN.

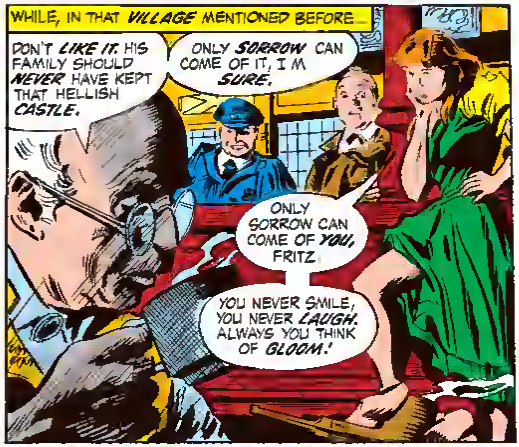
I'M SORRY, JEANIE. EVER SINCE WE LEFT *LONDON*... CLIFTON'S BEEN ACTING *STRANGE*.

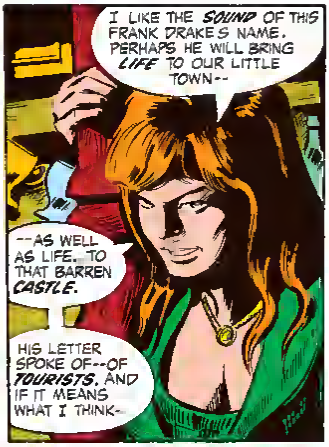
AND WE BOTH KNOW *WHY*, DON'T WE, FRANKIE?

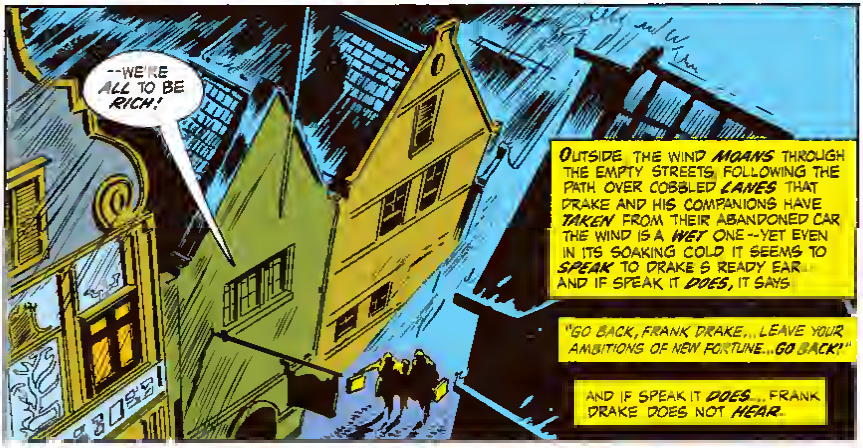
IT'S ALL *MY* FAULT FOR COMING ALONG I USED TO BE *HIS* GIRL!

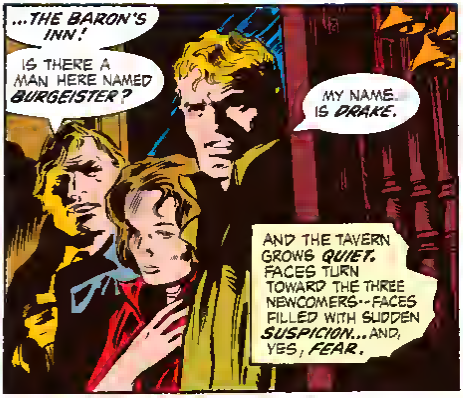
AND HE CAN'T *TAKE* MY BEING WITH *YOU*!

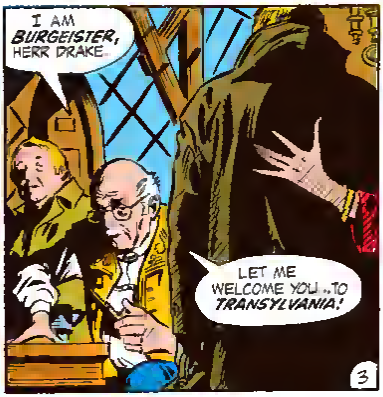
DRAKE DOESN'T *ANSWER*. PAINFULLY, HE KNOWS THAT WHAT SHE SAYS... IS *TRUE*.


WHILE, IN THAT VILLAGE MENTIONED BEFORE...
DON'T LIKE IT. HIS FAMILY SHOULD NEVER HAVE KEPT THAT HELLISH CASTLE.
ONLY SORROW CAN COME OF IT, I M SURE.
ONLY SORROW CAN COME OF YOU, FRITZ
YOU NEVER SMILE, YOU NEVER LAUGH. ALWAYS YOU THINK OF GLOOM!


I LIKE THE SOUND OF THIS FRANK DRAKE S NAME. PERHAPS HE WILL BRING LIFE TO OUR LITTLE TOWN--
--AS WELL AS LIFE.. TO THAT BARREN CASTLE.
HIS LETTER SPOKE OF--OF TOURISTS. AND IF IT MEANS WHAT I THINK--


--WE'RE ALL TO BE RICH!
OUTSIDE THE WIND MOANS THROUGH THE EMPTY STREETS FOLLOWING THE PATH OVER COBBLED LANES THAT DRAKE AND HIS COMPANIONS HAVE TAKEN FROM THEIR ABANDONED CAR THE WIND IS A WET ONE--YET EVEN IN ITS SOAKING COLD IT SEEMS TO SPEAK TO DRAKE S READY EAR... AND IF SPEAK IT DOES, IT SAYS
"GO BACK, FRANK DRAKE... LEAVE YOUR AMBITIONS OF NEW FORTUNE...GO BACK!"
AND IF SPEAK IT DOES... FRANK DRAKE DOES NOT HEAR.


...THE BARON'S INN!
IS THERE A MAN HERE NAMED BURGEISTER?
MY NAME... IS DRAKE.
AND THE TAVERN GROWS QUIET. FACES TURN TOWARD THE THREE NEWCOMERS--FACES FILLED WITH SUDDEN SUSPICION... AND, YES, FEAR.


I AM BURGEISTER, HERR DRAKE...
LET ME WELCOME YOU ..TO TRANSYLVANIA!

YOU HAVE A CAR WITH YOU? NO?

THEN I SUPPOSE YOU WISH TRANSPORTATION TO THE CASTLE?

THAT WOULD BE CONVENIENT, YES.

IS THERE ANYONE HERE WITH A CARRIAGE?

THERE ARE SEVERAL HERE WHO OWN CARRIAGES, HERR DRAKE.

THERE IS NONE WHO WILL TAKE YOU!

DON'T TELL ME YOU'RE AFRAID.

DIDN'T THAT GO OUT WITH BRAM STOKER?

HERR STOKER TOLD THE TRUTH--IN PART.

WE WISH YOU NO HARM...BUT WE WILL NOT AID YOU.

SPEAK FOR YOURSELF, BURGEISTER.

IF THE FARE IS GOOD, HERR DRAKE--?

I'LL MAKE IT WORTH YOUR WHILE, FRIEND.

THEN COME--BEFORE I CHANGE MY MIND.

WATCH OUT FOR OTTO HERR DRAKE. HIS MIND FILLS ONLY WITH FIGURES--

A WORTHY ENOUGH OCCUPATION, I'M SURE--

...BUT ONE THAT CANNOT BRING YOU TO ANY GOOD.

AND FRITZ--ISN'T IT AMUSING HOW I'VE TAKEN YOUR SIDE?

NEXT I'LL BE GOING TO CHURCH!

AND DRAKE LEAVES SILENTLY. SILENTLY... LEADING HIS FELLOWS TO THE CARRIAGE. HIS MIND WORKING OVER THE BARMAID'S WORDS.

...A SILLY FOOL, THAT GIRL, HERR DRAKE.

HER MOUTH RUNS FULL OF LIES!

DO YOU PEOPLE REALLY BELIEVE IN THE LEGEND... THE LEGEND OF DRACULA?

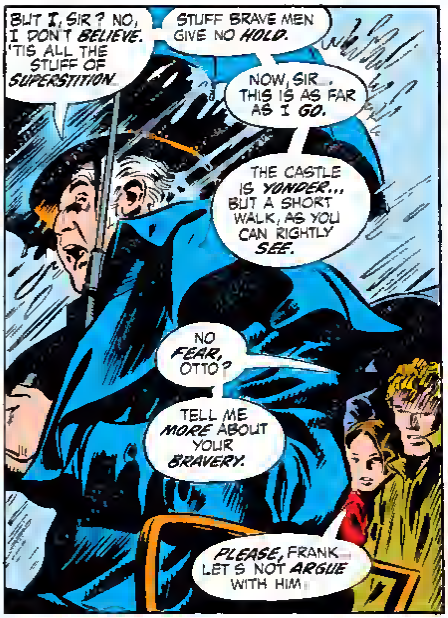
BELIEVE? THAT IS HARD TO SAY HERR DRAKE. IT IS FACT THAT THE COUNT EXISTED--BUT THAT HE WAS A VAMPIRE?

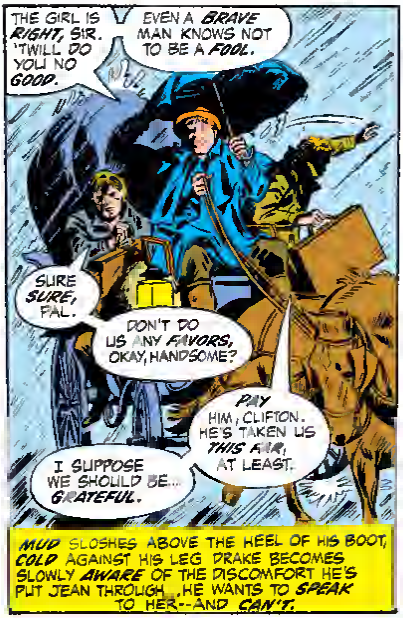
I HARDLY GIVE IT CREDENCE, MYSELF.. THOUGH THERE ARE MANY THAT DO--

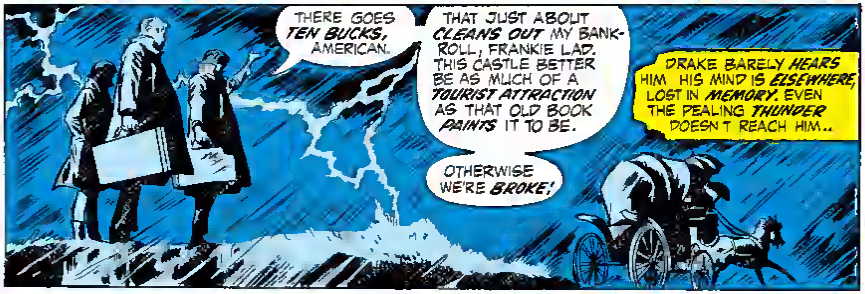
FOR THERE ARE MANY WHO BAR THEIR WINDOWS AT NIGHT AND SET A WREATH OF WOLF'S-BANE AT THEIR DOOR.

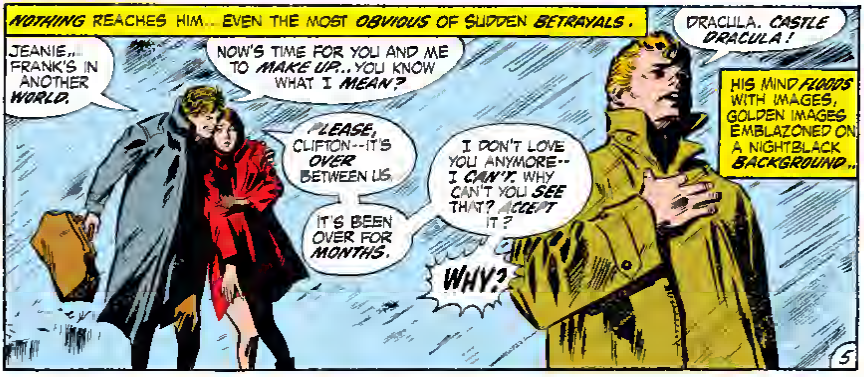
...AND MANY MORE WHO WEAR A BLESSED CRUCIFIX ABOUT THEIR NECKS. RELIGION? PERHAPS.

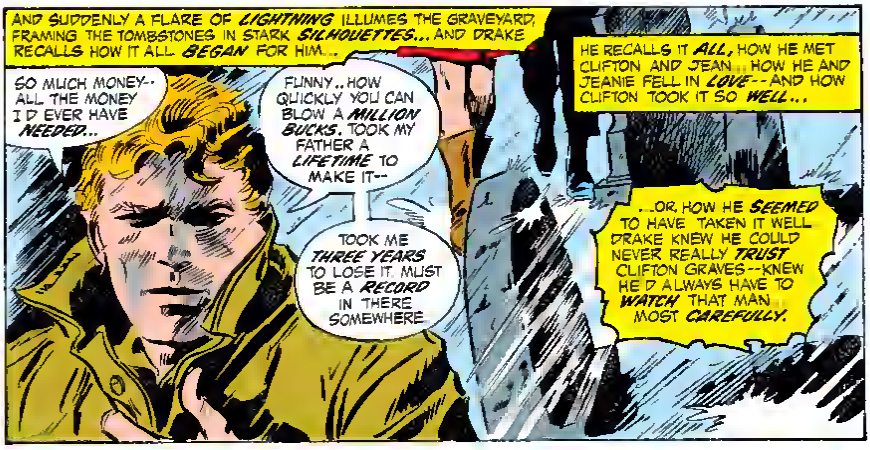
SOME WOULD CALL IT FEAR.

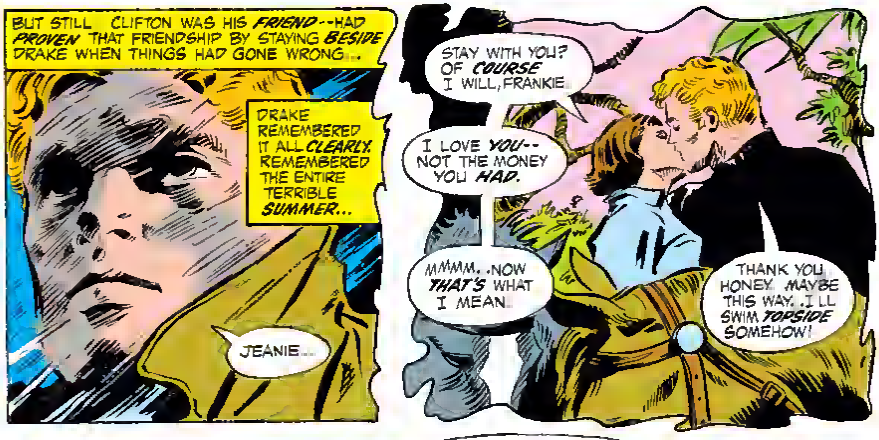

BUT I, SIR? NO, I DON'T BELIEVE. 'TIS ALL THE STUFF OF SUPERSTITION.
STUFF BRAVE MEN GIVE NO HOLD.
NOW, SIR... THIS IS AS FAR AS I GO.
THE CASTLE IS YONDER... BUT A SHORT WALK, AS YOU CAN RIGHTLY SEE.
NO FEAR, OTTO?
TELL ME MORE ABOUT YOUR BRAVERY.
PLEASE, FRANK... LET'S NOT ARGUE WITH HIM.

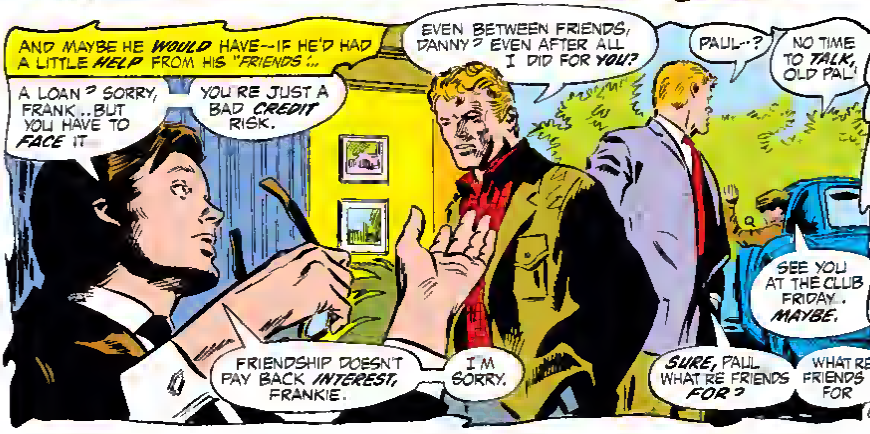

THE GIRL IS RIGHT, SIR. 'TWILL DO YOU NO GOOD.
EVEN A BRAVE MAN KNOWS NOT TO BE A FOOL.
SURE SURE, PAL.
DON'T DO US ANY FAVORS, OKAY, HANDSOME?
PAY HIM, CLIFTON. HE'S TAKEN US THIS FAR, AT LEAST.
I SUPPOSE WE SHOULD BE... GRATEFUL.
MUD SLOSHES ABOVE THE HEEL OF HIS BOOT, COLD AGAINST HIS LEG. DRAKE BECOMES SLOWLY AWARE OF THE DISCOMFORT HE'S PUT JEAN THROUGH...HE WANTS TO SPEAK TO HER--AND CAN'T.

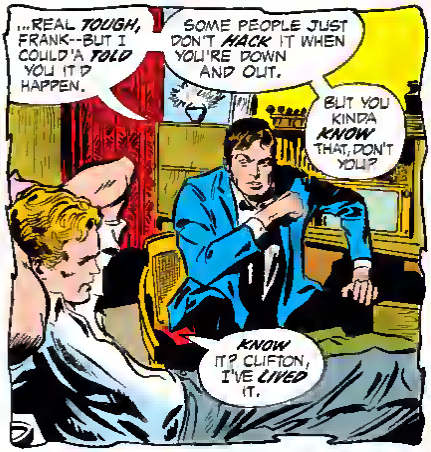

THERE GOES TEN BUCKS, AMERICAN.
THAT JUST ABOUT CLEANS OUT MY BANKROLL, FRANKIE LAD. THIS CASTLE BETTER BE AS MUCH OF A TOURIST ATTRACTION AS THAT OLD BOOK PAINTS IT TO BE.
OTHERWISE WE'RE BROKE!
DRAKE BARELY HEARS HIM. HIS MIND IS ELSEWHERE, LOST IN MEMORY. EVEN THE PEALING THUNDER DOESN'T REACH HIM..

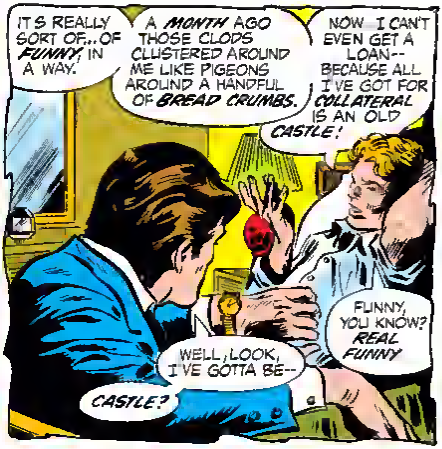

NOTHING REACHES HIM... EVEN THE MOST OBVIOUS OF SUDDEN BETRAYALS.
DRACULA. CASTLE DRACULA!
JEANIE... FRANK'S IN ANOTHER WORLD.
NOW'S TIME FOR YOU AND ME TO MAKE UP...YOU KNOW WHAT I MEAN?
PLEASE, CLIFTON--IT'S OVER BETWEEN US.
IT'S BEEN OVER FOR MONTHS.
I DON'T LOVE YOU ANYMORE-- I CAN'T. WHY CAN'T YOU SEE THAT? ACCEPT IT?
WHY?
HIS MIND FLOODS WITH IMAGES, GOLDEN IMAGES EMBLAZONED ON A NIGHTBLACK BACKGROUND..

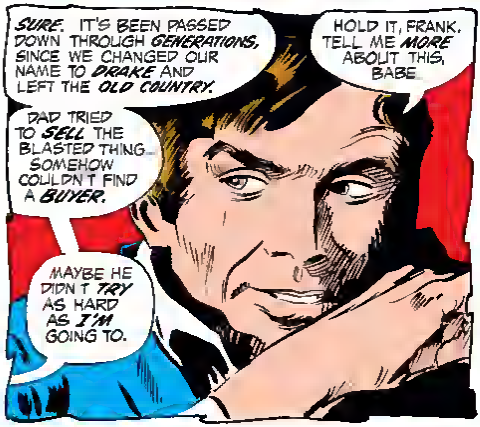

AND SUDDENLY A FLARE OF LIGHTNING ILLUMES THE GRAVEYARD, FRAMING THE TOMBSTONES IN STARK SILHOUETTES... AND DRAKE RECALLS HOW IT ALL BEGAN FOR HIM...
SO MUCH MONEY-- ALL THE MONEY I'D EVER HAVE NEEDED...
FUNNY.. HOW QUICKLY YOU CAN BLOW A MILLION BUCKS. TOOK MY FATHER A LIFETIME TO MAKE IT--
TOOK ME THREE YEARS TO LOSE IT. MUST BE A RECORD IN THERE SOMEWHERE
HE RECALLS IT ALL, HOW HE MET CLIFTON AND JEAN... HOW HE AND JEANIE FELL IN LOVE--AND HOW CLIFTON TOOK IT SO WELL...
...OR, HOW HE SEEMED TO HAVE TAKEN IT WELL DRAKE KNEW HE COULD NEVER REALLY TRUST CLIFTON GRAVES--KNEW HE'D ALWAYS HAVE TO WATCH THAT MAN... MOST CAREFULLY.

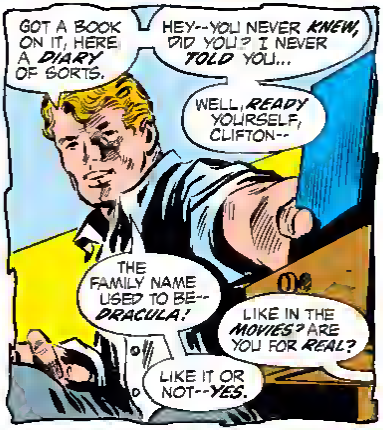

BUT STILL CLIFTON WAS HIS FRIEND--HAD PROVEN THAT FRIENDSHIP BY STAYING BESIDE DRAKE WHEN THINGS HAD GONE WRONG...
DRAKE REMEMBERED IT ALL CLEARLY. REMEMBERED THE ENTIRE TERRIBLE SUMMER...
JEANIE...
STAY WITH YOU? OF COURSE I WILL, FRANKIE.
I LOVE YOU-- NOT THE MONEY YOU HAD.
MMMM... NOW THAT'S WHAT I MEAN.
THANK YOU HONEY. MAYBE THIS WAY, I'LL SWIM TOPSIDE SOMEHOW!

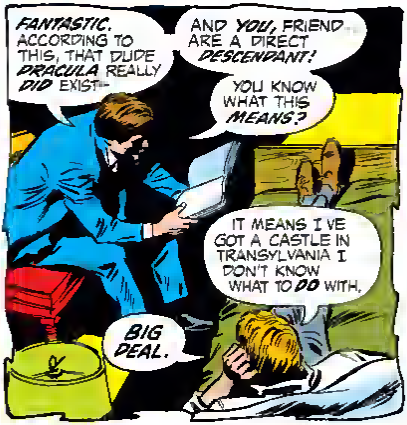

AND MAYBE HE WOULD HAVE--IF HE'D HAD A LITTLE HELP FROM HIS "FRIENDS"...
A LOAN? SORRY, FRANK.. BUT YOU HAVE TO FACE IT.
YOU'RE JUST A BAD CREDIT RISK.
EVEN BETWEEN FRIENDS, DANNY? EVEN AFTER ALL I DID FOR YOU?
PAUL--?
NO TIME TO TALK, OLD PAL!
SEE YOU AT THE CLUB FRIDAY. MAYBE.
FRIENDSHIP DOESN'T PAY BACK INTEREST, FRANKIE.
I'M SORRY.
SURE, PAUL. WHAT'RE FRIENDS FOR?
WHAT'RE FRIENDS FOR

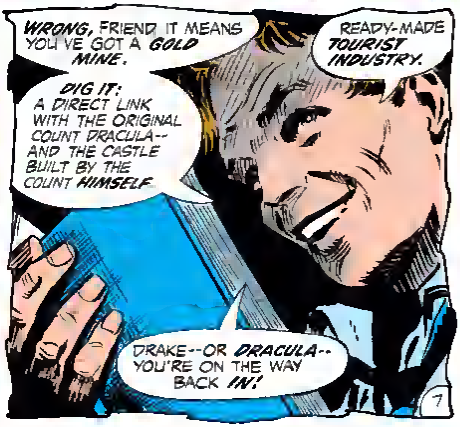

...REAL TOUGH, FRANK--BUT I COULD'A TOLD YOU IT'D HAPPEN.
SOME PEOPLE JUST DON'T HACK IT WHEN YOU'RE DOWN AND OUT.
BUT YOU KINDA KNOW THAT, DON'T YOU?
KNOW IT? CLIFTON, I'VE LIVED IT.

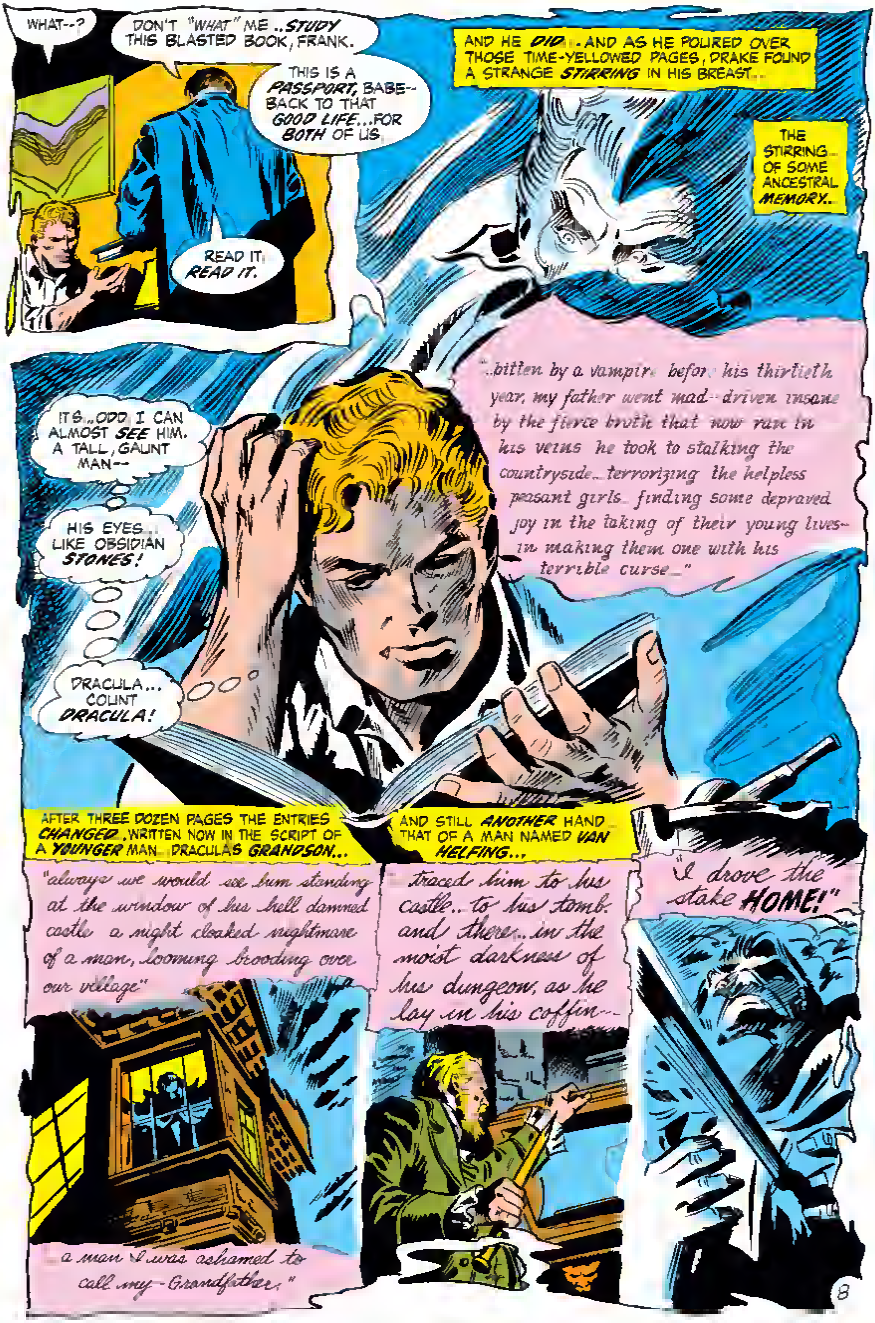

IT'S REALLY SORT OF... OF FUNNY, IN A WAY.
A MONTH AGO THOSE CLODS CLUSTERED AROUND ME LIKE PIGEONS AROUND A HANDFUL OF BREAD CRUMBS.
NOW I CAN'T EVEN GET A LOAN-- BECAUSE ALL I'VE GOT FOR COLLATERAL IS AN OLD CASTLE!
FUNNY, YOU KNOW? REAL FUNNY
WELL, LOOK, I'VE GOTTA BE--
CASTLE?


SURE. IT'S BEEN PASSED DOWN THROUGH GENERATIONS, SINCE WE CHANGED OUR NAME TO DRAKE AND LEFT THE OLD COUNTRY.
HOLD IT, FRANK. TELL ME MORE ABOUT THIS, BABE.
DAD TRIED TO SELL THE BLASTED THING... SOMEHOW COULDN'T FIND A BUYER.
MAYBE HE DIDN'T TRY AS HARD AS I'M GOING TO.


GOT A BOOK ON IT, HERE. A DIARY OF SORTS.
HEY--YOU NEVER KNEW, DID YOU? I NEVER TOLD YOU...
WELL, READY YOURSELF, CLIFTON--
THE FAMILY NAME USED TO BE-- DRACULA!
LIKE IN THE MOVIES? ARE YOU FOR REAL?
LIKE IT OR NOT--YES.


FANTASTIC. ACCORDING TO THIS, THAT DUDE DRACULA REALLY DID EXIST--
AND YOU, FRIEND ARE A DIRECT DESCENDANT!
YOU KNOW WHAT THIS MEANS?
IT MEANS I'VE GOT A CASTLE IN TRANSYLVANIA I DON'T KNOW WHAT TO DO WITH.
BIG DEAL.


WRONG, FRIEND IT MEANS YOU'VE GOT A GOLD MINE.
READY-MADE TOURIST INDUSTRY.
DIG IT: A DIRECT LINK WITH THE ORIGINAL COUNT DRACULA-- AND THE CASTLE BUILT BY THE COUNT HIMSELF.
DRAKE--OR DRACULA-- YOU'RE ON THE WAY BACK IN!


WHAT--?
DON'T "WHAT" ME ..STUDY THIS BLASTED BOOK, FRANK.
THIS IS A PASSPORT, BABE-- BACK TO THAT GOOD LIFE...FOR BOTH OF US.
READ IT! READ IT.
AND HE DID...AND AS HE POURED OVER THOSE TIME-YELLOWED PAGES, DRAKE FOUND A STRANGE STIRRING IN HIS BREAST...
THE STIRRING... OF SOME ANCESTRAL MEMORY..
"...bitten by a vampire... before his thirtieth year, my father went mad--driven insane by the fierce broth that now ran in his veins he took to stalking the countryside... terrorizing the helpless peasant girls... finding some depraved joy in the taking of their young lives--in making them one with his terrible curse..."
IT'S...ODD I CAN ALMOST SEE HIM. A TALL, GAUNT MAN--
HIS EYES... LIKE OBSIDIAN STONES!
DRACULA... COUNT DRACULA!
AFTER THREE DOZEN PAGES THE ENTRIES CHANGED...WRITTEN NOW IN THE SCRIPT OF A YOUNGER MAN... DRACULA'S GRANDSON...
AND STILL ANOTHER HAND THAT OF A MAN NAMED VAN HELFING...
"always we would see him standing at the window of his hell damned castle a night cloaked nightmare of a man, looming brooding over our village"
"traced him to his castle... to his tomb. and there... in the moist darkness of his dungeon, as he lay in his coffin--
"I drove the stake HOME!"
"...a man I was ashamed to call my Grandfather."

TIME PASSED FOR FRANK DRAKE. TIME PASSED *SLOWLY*, UNTIL...

CAN'T GET IT OUT OF MY *MIND*.

I KEEP *SEEING* HIM, LYING THERE SLEEPING... AND THAT *STAKE*--!

YEAH. I NOTICED YOU WERE SOMEWHAT--*SHOOK UP*.

HAVE YOU *THOUGHT* ABOUT THAT IDEA? ABOUT TURNING THE CASTLE INTO A *MUSEUM*--AND MAKING YOURSELF ITS *PROPRIETOR*?

NOTHING *BUT*. ALL RIGHT, CLIFTON.

WE'LL *DO* IT!

AND DON'T SAY NO *AGAIN*.

IF YOU *MUST* GO ON THIS--THIS CRAZY *JOURNEY*... THEN I'M COMING *WITH* YOU.

PERIOD!

SURE, DARLING. *SURE*.

AND NOT *ONCE* DID DRAKE *WONDER*... WHY WAS CLIFTON SO *HELPFUL*--AFTER ALL DRAKE HAD *DONE* TO HIM?

NOW IT'S TOO *LATE* TO WONDER. THE SKY PEELS *OPEN* 'MIDST A GOLDEN GLARE OF *LIGHTNING*, AND IN THE SUDDEN BRILLIANCE THEY *SEE*--

--THE **CASTLE!**

THIS IT *IT*, FRANKIE-BOY... *HOMECOMING*.

SHUT UP, CLIFTON!

I'M GETTING TO THE POINT WHEN I CAN'T *STAND* THE SOUND OF YOUR WEASLING *VOICE*.

DOESN'T IT SORTA *CHOKE YOU UP*?

I'M *SORRY*, CLIFTON. PLEASE, JUST LET ME *THINK*. LET ME GET *USED* TO IT.

HOMECOMING? IN...IN A STRANGE WAY--THAT'S *TRUE*.

THAT'S VERY *TRUE*!

SURE, FRANK, SURE. NO HARM *MEANT*--

--AND NONE *TAKEN*?

BUT FRANK DRAKE DOESN'T ANSWER. ONCE MORE, HIS THOUGHTS ARE LOST, AS HE SEARCHES THE DEPTHS OF HIS NOW-TROUBLED *SOUL*... WONDERING IF PERHAPS THERE'S *MORE* TO THE DRACULA LEGEND THAN MERE *FANTASY*--WONDERING, IN FACT, IF THERE'S NOT SOMETHING *PERSONAL* IN THAT CASTLE FOR FRANK DRAKE TO *FEAR*.

VERY QUIETLY HE LEADS THEM THROUGH THE *FOREST* OF WIND-BEATEN STONES, HIS FEET CLACKING SOFTLY ON THE RAIN-WASHED FLAGSTONED *PATH*.

WHY DO I FEEL THIS WAY? AS THOUGH EVERY PILLAR, EVERY WALL--WERE FAMILAR, SOMETHING I'D SEEN BEFORE...

EVEN THE SOUNDS... EVEN THE DISTANT, FADING ECHOES--ARE "RIGHT" I KNOW THOSE SOUNDS... I KNOW THOSE WALLS...

THIS CASTLE... I KNOW THIS CASTLE!

FRANKIE? ARE YOU... ARE YOU ALL RIGHT?

HE SEEMS SO FAR FROM ME. I NEED HIS ARMS AROUND ME, NEED HIM TO HOLD ME--AND YET, HE DOESN'T SEEM TO KNOW I'M HERE!

FRANKIE I LOVE YOU. DON'T SHUT ME OUT!

I NEED YOU!

BOTH MINDS ARE CLOSED TO EACH OTHER. THE THOUGHTS OF BOTH ARE HIDDEN... AND SO NEITHER KNOWS THE DESPERATE WANTING OF THE OTHER... AND THE TWO WHO SHOULD BE ONE ARE ALONE.

ALONE... SAVE FOR THE BARELY AUDIBLE DRIP OF WATER IN THE DISTANCE--AND A SUDDEN, GENTLE RUSTLING...

SOFTLY AT FIRST THAN WITH INCREASING LOUDNESS, THAT RUSTLING BUILDS... SOUNDING LIKE THE CRINKLING OF AUTUMN LEAVES, THEN LIKE SOMETHING MORE--

SOMETHING LEATHERY--SOMETHING QUITE POWERFUL... SOMETHING DEADLY!

FRANKIE? DO--DO YOU HEAR ANYTHING?

FRANKIE? THAT SOUND...

IT SOUNDS LIKE--

--BATS!

HIS SEEMING TRANCE BROKEN, DRAKE MOVES--!

EEEEEEE

GET DOWN, JEANIE--

GET DOWN!

COVER YOUR EYES--KEEP THEM AWAY FROM YOUR EYES!

FRANKIE--OH PLEASE--DON'T LET THEM--

GONE!

LORD, BATS! I CAN'T STAND THEM--FILTHY--!

SHUT UP, CLIFTON!

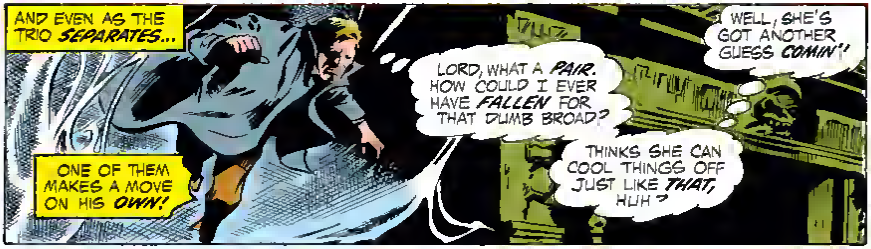
HONEY... ARE YOU OKAY? THEY DIDN'T--?

--HURT ME? NO, NO, I'M ALL RIGHT.

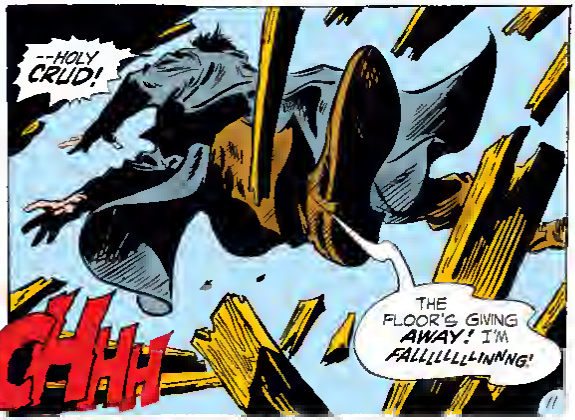
I--I JUST... JUST WANT TO GET OUT OF HERE... OUT OF THIS ENTIRE COUNTRY!

SHE STEPS AWAY FROM HIM, MOVING INTO A POOL OF SOFT YELLOW LIGHT, HER THOUGHTS RACING...
I. I WISH I NEVER HEARD OF CASTLE DRACULA .. OR OF THIS MAD COUNTRY.
EVERYTHING SEEMS STRANGER HERE. EVEN THE THINGS I THOUGHT I USED TO KNOW...
EVEN FRANKIE.

WHEN HE GAVE ME THIS SILVER COMPACT, IT WAS AS THOUGH HE'D GIVEN ME ALL HE OWNED.
NOW... HE'S CHANGED IN A WAY...
I DON'T KNOW HIM ANYMORE!


AND EVEN AS THE TRIO SEPARATES...
ONE OF THEM MAKES A MOVE ON HIS OWN!
LORD, WHAT A PAIR. HOW COULD I EVER HAVE FALLEN FOR THAT DUMB BROAD?
WELL, SHE'S GOT ANOTHER GUESS COMIN'!
THINKS SHE CAN COOL THINGS OFF JUST LIKE THAT, HUH?

I'VE BEEN PLANNIN' THIS WHOLE DEAL EVER SINCE I FIRST SAW THAT BOOK, AN' I'M NOT--
CRUN--

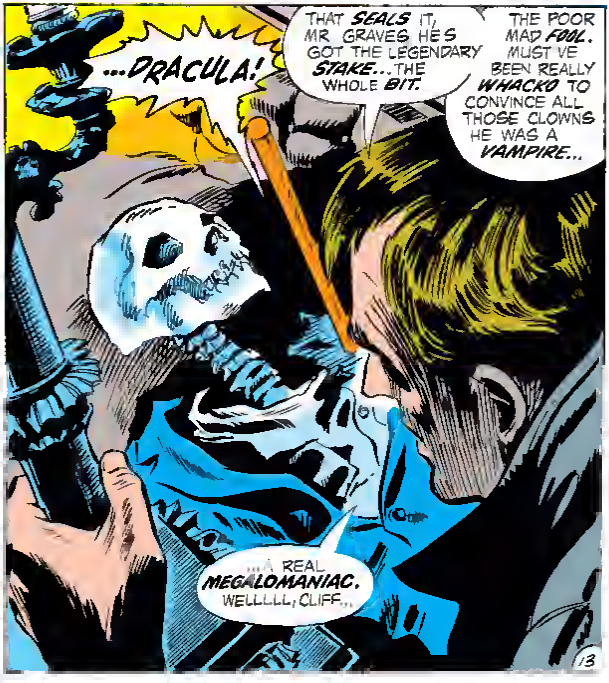

--HOLY CRUD!
THE FLOOR'S GIVING AWAY! I'M FALLLLLLLLINNNG!
CHHH

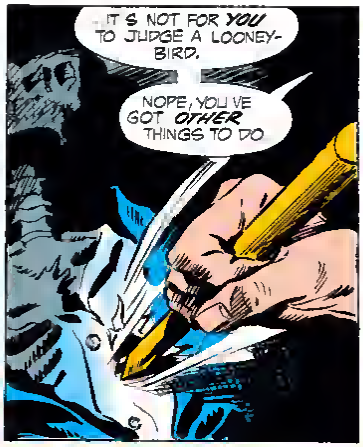
OVER! AS QUICKLY AS IT BEGAN, THE FALL ENDS SHORT FEET BELOW, IN A WELL OF FETID DARKNESS...
CRIPES ...LUCKY I DIDN'T SNAP MY LEG.
WHERE THE HECK AM I, ANYWAY? DEEDS DIDN'T SAY ANYTHING BOUT A DUNGEON...
WHOA, CLIFF OLD BOY... HANG IN THERE A SECOND
LOOKS LIKE YOU'VE FOUND THE PROVERBIAL POT AT THE END OF THE RAINBOW.
LESS I MISS MY GUESS, THIS HERE'S THE TOMB.
...IN WHICH CASE, MISTER GRAVES, YOU'RE GONNA CASH IN EVEN BETTER 'N YOU EXPECTED.
THAT FOOL FRANKIE...
COUNT DRACU
IT'LL SERVE 'IM RIGHT WHEN I TAKE THE GIRL, THE CASTLE, AND HIS CRUMMY LIFE. I--
WUZZAT?
FAN-TASTIC! IT'S THE OLD BOY'S CRYPT!
AND THEN SUDDENLY THE DREAMS BEGIN TO CRUMBLE...
...AS CLIFTON'S HAND BRUSHES THE BRONZE BAT EMBLEM...
THUNP
...AND THE STONE WALL MOVES!
WHEEE--O! SOME SORTA HINGES MOVE THIS THING--
...IT'S LIKE A BARGAIN BASEMENT HORROR HOUSE.
NOW LET'S JUST SEE WHAT OL' CLIFTON CAN FIND INSIDE...!
12

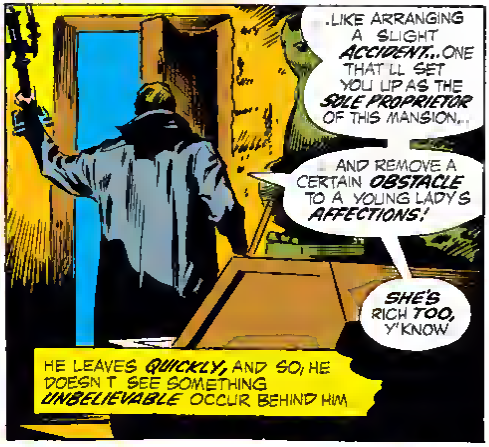
HIS FOOTSTEPS ARE SOFT AND HESITANT, AND HE GROPES BEFORE HIMSELF IN THE PITCH BLACKNESS...
...THEN HIS OUTSTRETCHED HAND TOUCHES A COBWEBBED CANDELABRUM...HE STRIKES ANOTHER MATCH...
...AND THE ROOM IS LIT!
CAREFUL, CLIFFY... THIS BABE LOOKS LIKE THE REAL McCOY!

...AND IF IT TRULY IS, THEN YOUR DAYS OF SOCIAL BUMMING ARE OVER...

...'CAUSE THERE'S ONLY ONE CAT WHO CAN BE INSIDE...

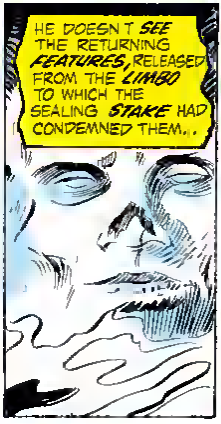

...DRACULA!
THAT SEALS IT, MR. GRAVES. HE'S GOT THE LEGENDARY STAKE...THE WHOLE BIT.
THE POOR MAD FOOL. MUST'VE BEEN REALLY WHACKO TO CONVINCE ALL THOSE CLOWNS HE WAS A VAMPIRE...
...A REAL MEGALOMANIAC. WELLLLL, CLIFF...


..IT'S NOT FOR YOU TO JUDGE A LOONEY-BIRD.
NOPE, YOU'VE GOT OTHER THINGS TO DO


..LIKE ARRANGING A SLIGHT ACCIDENT...ONE THAT'LL SET YOU UP AS THE SOLE PROPRIETOR OF THIS MANSION...
..AND REMOVE A CERTAIN OBSTACLE TO A YOUNG LADY'S AFFECTIONS!
SHE'S RICH TOO, Y'KNOW!
HE LEAVES QUICKLY, AND SO, HE DOESN'T SEE SOMETHING UNBELIEVABLE OCCUR BEHIND HIM

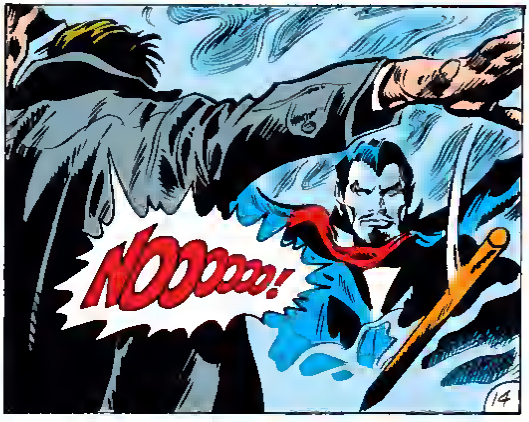
..AS A STRANGE COALESCING BEGINS IN THE DUSTY COFFIN..

..A COMING-TOGETHER OF ANCIENT MISTS, OF LONG-DISPARATE ASH...


HE DOESN'T SEE THE RETURNING FEATURES, RELEASED FROM THE LIMBO TO WHICH THE SEALING STAKE HAD CONDEMNED THEM...

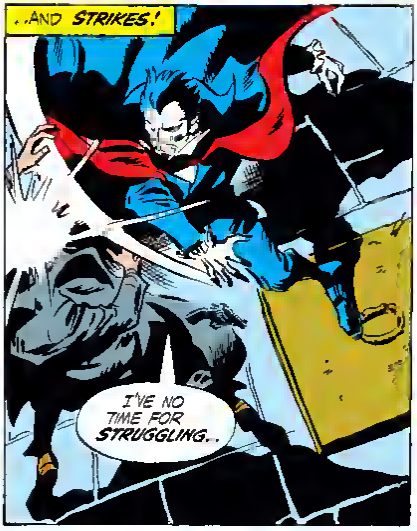
..HE DOESN'T SEE THAT..
...DRACULA LIVES AGAIN!

HUH...?
..THAT RUSTLING SOUND...?


NOOOOOO!

THE YEARS HAVE BEEN LONG, AND I AM WEARY OF THEM.
I YEARNED FOR THOSE THINGS FOR WHICH ONCE I LIVED...THE CLOUDS ACROSS A GLOWING MOON...THE BAYING OF NIGHT'S CHILDREN...
...AND MOST OF ALL, I YEARN FOR THAT MOST PLEASING TASTE...
...THE SWEET NECTAR OF LIFE ITSELF!

HIS MIND SHATTERED WITH BLISTERING FEAR, CLIFTON STRIKES OUT BLINDLY--
--THE GUN HE SMUGGLED THROUGH CUSTOMS BARKING OUT WILDLY, LIKE CHAIN LIGHTNING--
--BUT TO NO EFFECT!
CLIFTON'S WORDS ARE LOST IN FRUSTRATED SOBBING AND THEN THE SLEEK, BLACK-HAIRED MAN STEPS FORWARD...


...AND STRIKES!
I'VE NO TIME FOR STRUGGLING...

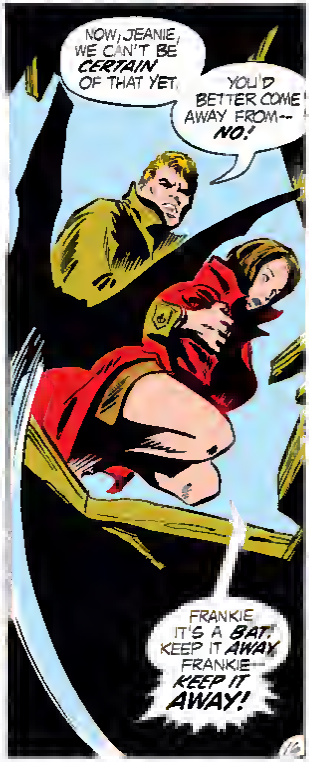
...AND SO, YOU WILL JOIN THE OTHERS FAR BELOW...
...WHERE YOU WILL WAIT, WITH THEM, FOR THAT MOMENT.
AAAAA

WHEN I SUMMON YOU...EH?
IT APPEARS MY CASTLE IS NO LONGER DESERTED. I HEAR VOICES FROM THE FLOORS ABOVE...

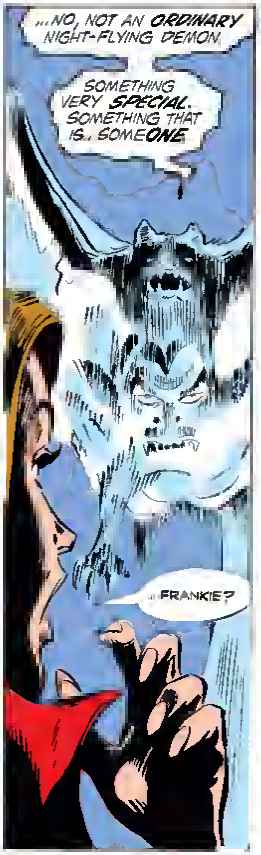
...AND ONE OF THE VOICES... IS A WOMAN'S.

...ARE YOU SURE, JEANIE?
DON'T BE SILLY, FRANKIE... OF COURSE I AM...
CLIFTON CAME DOWN THIS WAY I SAW HIM RUNNING... WAIT!

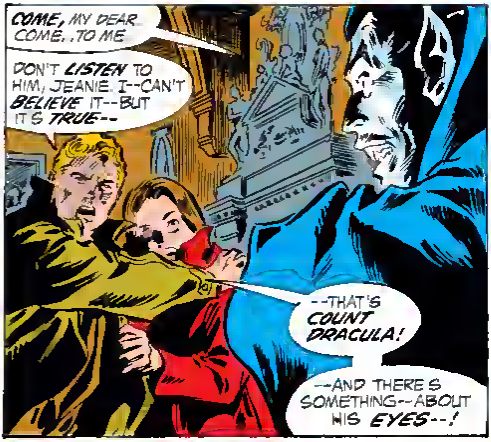
WHAT IS IT, HONEY?
THERE'S A HOLE IN THE FLOORING-- AND IT'S FRESH.
CLIFF MUST'VE FALLEN THROUGH!


NOW, JEANIE, WE CAN'T BE CERTAIN OF THAT YET.
YOU'D BETTER COME AWAY FROM-- NO!
FRANKIE IT'S A BAT! KEEP IT AWAY FRANKIE-- KEEP IT AWAY!

HE MAY FIND THAT DIFFICULT, MY DEAR WOMAN...
...FOR, THIS IS NOT JUST ANY BAT...


...NO, NOT AN ORDINARY NIGHT-FLYING DEMON...
SOMETHING VERY SPECIAL. SOMETHING THAT IS... SOMEONE
...FRANKIE?

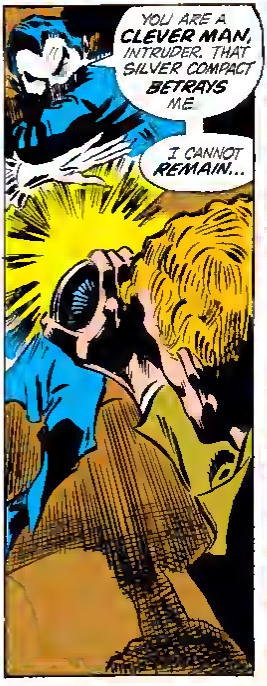
SOMEONE WHO IS DRACULA.
THE MOON-LIGHT SEEMS TO CATCH IN THE POOLS OF HIS EYES, AND TO FLICKER AND DANCE, TWISTING IN THE ANCIENT SHADOWS, AS...


COME, MY DEAR. COME...TO ME.
DON'T LISTEN TO HIM, JEANIE. I--CAN'T BELIEVE IT--BUT IT'S TRUE--
--THAT'S COUNT DRACULA!
--AND THERE'S SOMETHING--ABOUT HIS EYES--!

--JEANIE!
DON'T TRY TO STOP ME, FRANK.
I MUST GO TO HIM...!

NO!
HE'S MANAGED TO HYPNOTIZE YOU IN SOME WAY--WITH THOSE DAMNABLE EYES OF HIS.
IT'S JUST LIKE THEY CLAIMED IN THE LEGENDS! ALL THOSE INSANE STORIES WEREN'T LIES!

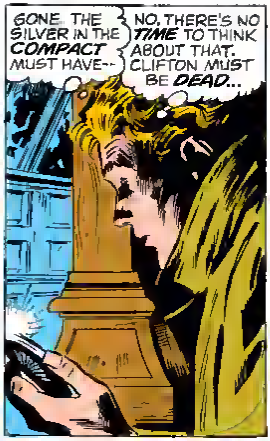
THERE ARE VAMPIRES--
--AND, LORD HELP US, ONE OF THEM'S ALIVE!
BUT MAYBE WE'VE GOT A CHANCE, THOSE TALES ABOUT SILVER...!


YOU ARE A CLEVER MAN, INTRUDER. THAT SILVER COMPACT BETRAYS ME.
I CANNOT REMAIN...

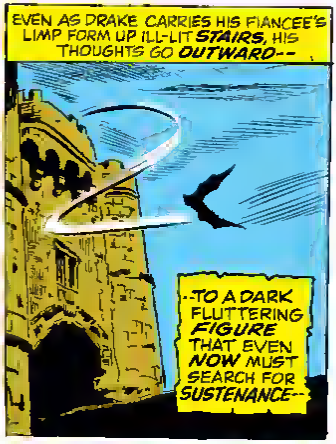
BUT THIS I PROMISE YOU, FOUL DAYLIGHTER...

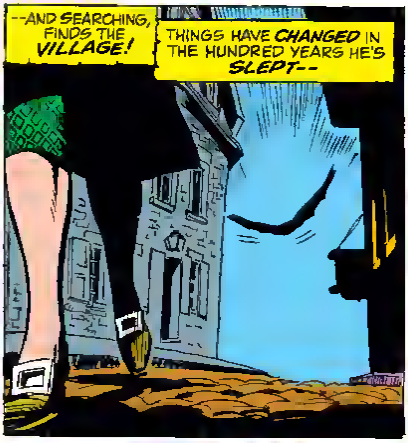
...DRACULA IS NOT SO EASILY DISPATCHED...

...FOR LONG.

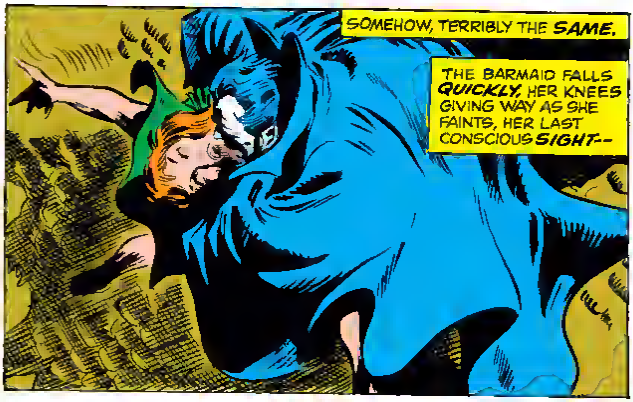

GONE THE SILVER IN THE COMPACT MUST HAVE--
NO, THERE'S NO TIME TO THINK ABOUT THAT. CLIFTON MUST BE DEAD...

. AND JEANIE'S CLOSE TO DYING!

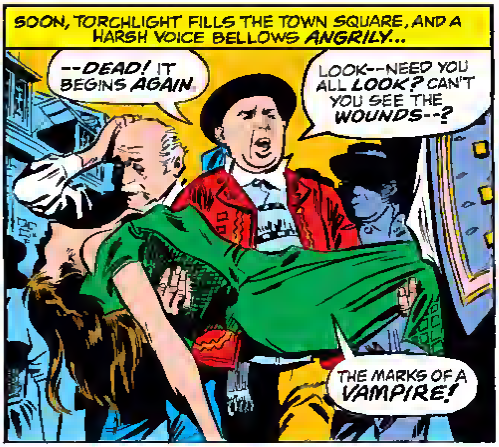

EVEN AS DRAKE CARRIES HIS FIANCEE'S LIMP FORM UP ILL-LIT STAIRS, HIS THOUGHTS GO OUTWARD--
--TO A DARK FLUTTERING FIGURE THAT EVEN NOW MUST SEARCH FOR SUSTENANCE--


--AND SEARCHING, FINDS THE VILLAGE!
THINGS HAVE CHANGED IN THE HUNDRED YEARS HE'S SLEPT--

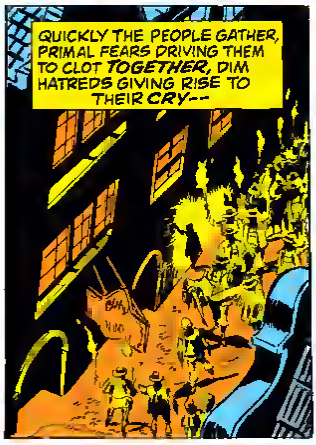
THERE ARE NEW TOWNSFOLK, NEW WOMEN... AND YET, ALL IS SOMEHOW THE SAME...
--WHO?
EEEEEE

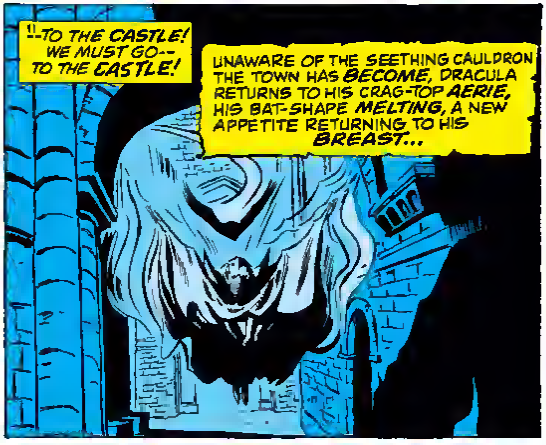

SOMEHOW, TERRIBLY THE SAME.
THE BARMAID FALLS QUICKLY, HER KNEES GIVING WAY AS SHE FAINTS, HER LAST CONSCIOUS SIGHT--

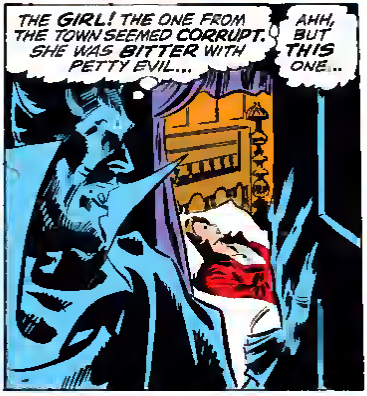
--THE FORM OF A CREATURE CALLED DRACULA!

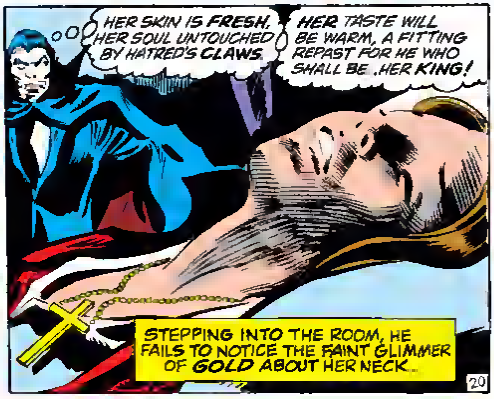

SOON, TORCHLIGHT FILLS THE TOWN SQUARE, AND A HARSH VOICE BELLOWS ANGRILY...
--DEAD! IT BEGINS AGAIN.
LOOK--NEED YOU ALL LOOK? CAN'T YOU SEE THE WOUNDS--?
THE MARKS OF A VAMPIRE!

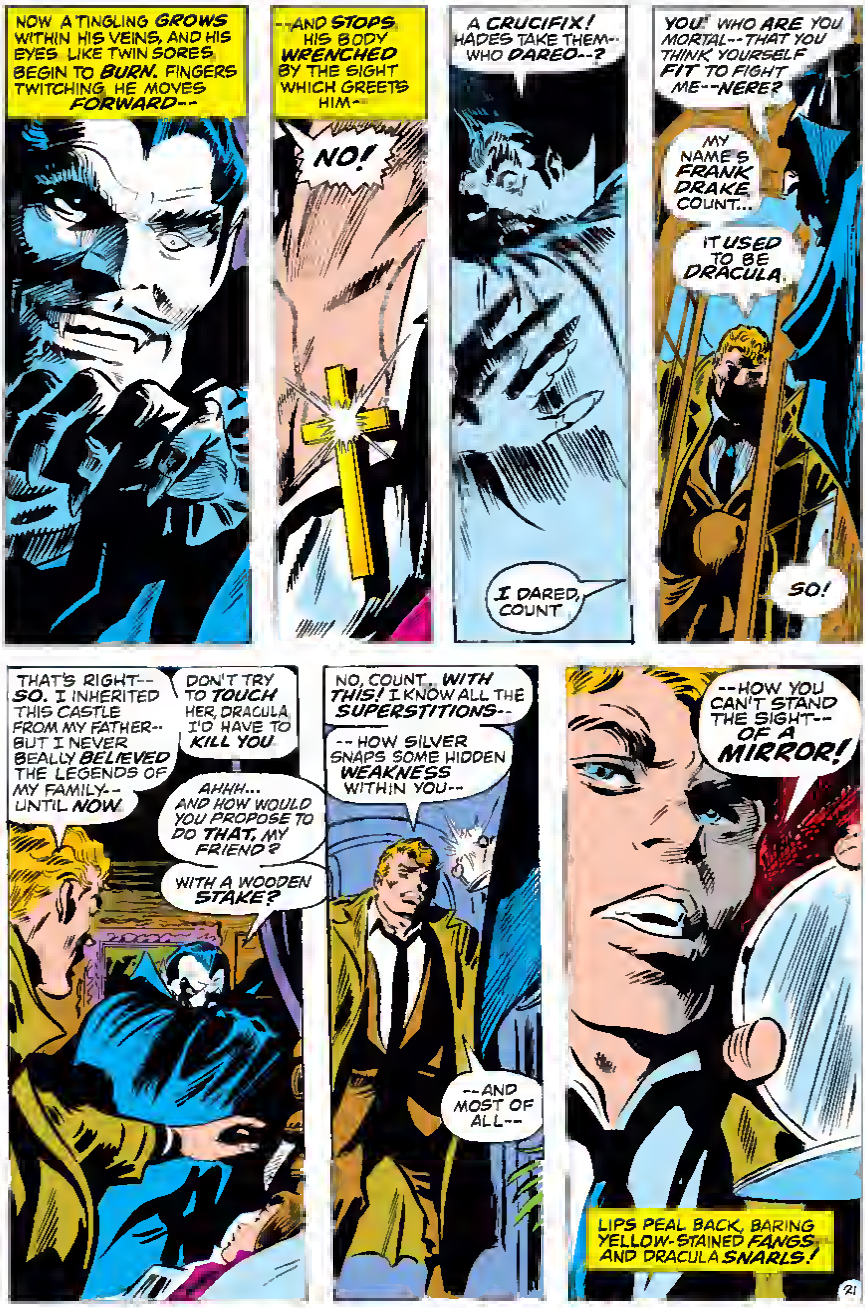
THEM...IT MUST'VE BEEN THE THREE, I THINK.
THEY WENT TO THE CASTLE, AND NOW THE GIRL IS DEAD.
YOU MEAN HERR DRAKE?
OF COURSE. HE MUST HAVE WOKEN-- DRACULA!


QUICKLY THE PEOPLE GATHER, PRIMAL FEARS DRIVING THEM TO CLOT TOGETHER, DIM HATREDS GIVING RISE TO THEIR CRY---


!--TO THE CASTLE! WE MUST GO-- TO THE CASTLE!
UNAWARE OF THE SEETHING CAULDRON THE TOWN HAS BECOME, DRACULA RETURNS TO HIS CRAG-TOP AERIE, HIS BAT-SHAPE MELTING, A NEW APPETITE RETURNING TO HIS BREAST...


THE GIRL! THE ONE FROM THE TOWN SEEMED CORRUPT. SHE WAS BITTER WITH PETTY EVIL...
AHH, BUT THIS ONE...

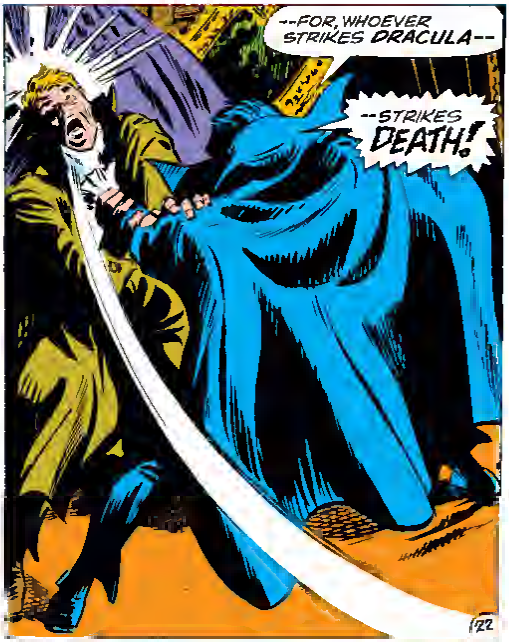

HER SKIN IS FRESH, HER SOUL UNTOUCHED BY HATRED'S CLAWS.
HER TASTE WILL BE WARM, A FITTING REPAST FOR HE WHO SHALL BE HER KING!
STEPPING INTO THE ROOM, HE FAILS TO NOTICE THE FAINT GLIMMER OF GOLD ABOUT HER NECK...

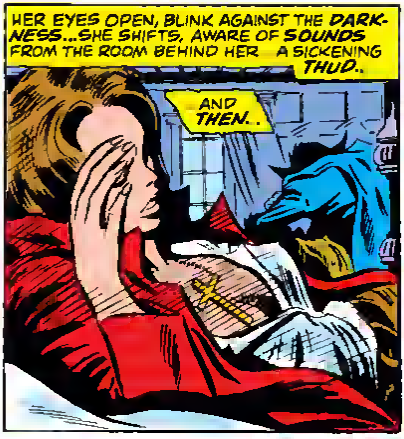

NOW A TINGLING GROWS WITHIN HIS VEINS, AND HIS EYES LIKE TWIN SORES, BEGIN TO BURN. FINGERS TWITCHING HE MOVES FORWARD--
--AND STOPS, HIS BODY WRENCHED BY THE SIGHT WHICH GREETS HIM--
NO!
A CRUCIFIX! HADES TAKE THEM-- WHO DARED--?
I DARED, COUNT
YOU! WHO ARE YOU MORTAL--THAT YOU THINK YOURSELF FIT TO FIGHT ME--HERE?
MY NAME'S FRANK DRAKE, COUNT...
IT USED TO BE DRACULA.
SO!
THAT'S RIGHT-- SO. I INHERITED THIS CASTLE FROM MY FATHER-- BUT I NEVER REALLY BELIEVED THE LEGENDS OF MY FAMILY-- UNTIL NOW.
DON'T TRY TO TOUCH HER, DRACULA I'D HAVE TO KILL YOU.
AHHH... AND HOW WOULD YOU PROPOSE TO DO THAT, MY FRIEND?
WITH A WOODEN STAKE?
NO, COUNT... WITH THIS! I KNOW ALL THE SUPERSTITIONS--
-- HOW SILVER SNAPS SOME HIDDEN WEAKNESS WITHIN YOU--
--AND MOST OF ALL--
--HOW YOU CAN'T STAND THE SIGHT-- OF A MIRROR!
LIPS PEAL BACK, BARING YELLOW-STAINED FANGS, AND DRACULA SNARLS!

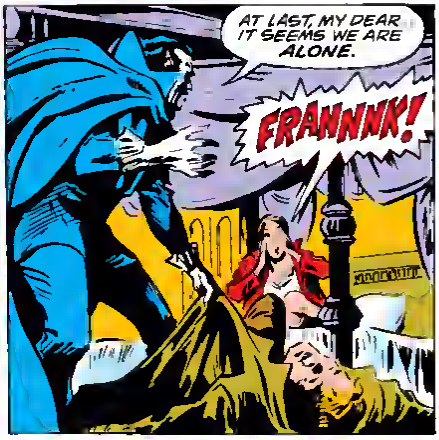
COUSIN, YOU ARE A FOOL THE BLOOD OF DRACULAS RUNS IN YOUR VEINS--
SOMEDAY THE CURSE WILL VISIT YOU AS WELL--
AND YOU, HERR DRAKE-- SHALL LIVE-- WITH DEATH!

THAT BURNS IT, BUDDY.
MAYBE I AM A DESCENDANT OF YOURS-- BUT YOU WERE BITTEN, COUNT--
--AND FRANKLY, THAT'S ONE THING I'M PLANNING TO AVOID!
WAK!

IDIOT! DID YOU REALLY THINK THAT COMPACT WOULD DESTROY ME?
YOU'VE SEALED YOUR END, MY FRIEND--


--FOR, WHOEVER STRIKES DRACULA--
--STRIKES DEATH!


HER EYES OPEN, BLINK AGAINST THE DARKNESS...SHE SHIFTS, AWARE OF SOUNDS FROM THE ROOM BEHIND HER. A SICKENING THUD..
AND THEN..

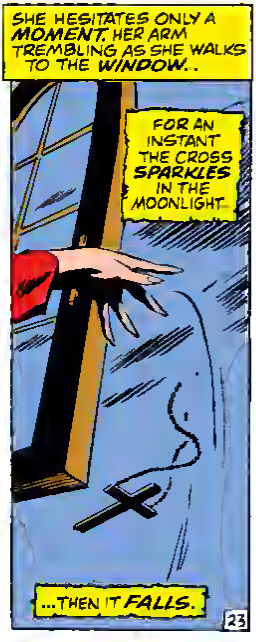

AT LAST, MY DEAR IT SEEMS WE ARE ALONE.
FRANNNK!

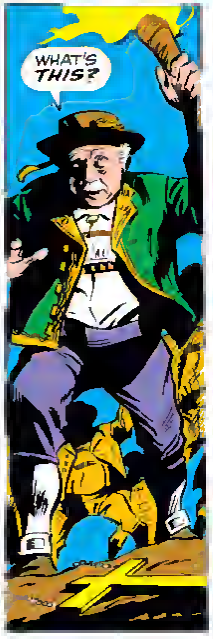
FAR BELOW, CAPPED HEADS LOOK SKYWARD, NECKS CRANE AND EYES NARROW--THE SCREAM FADES OFF, AND THE MEN HASTEN THEIR PACE--
--TO THE CASTLE, --TO THE CASTLE!

AND MIDST THE GRAY SHADOWS, A HAND FLICKS OUT, FINGERS DARTING. THE GIRL STARES, AND SLOWLY, HER EYES..GO BLANK.

THERE, MY DARLING... THERE.
REMOVE THAT HATED BAUBLE--

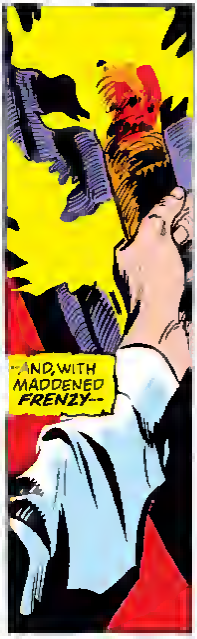
--REMOVE IT!


SHE HESITATES ONLY A MOMENT. HER ARM TREMBLING AS SHE WALKS TO THE WINDOW..
FOR AN INSTANT THE CROSS SPARKLES IN THE MOONLIGHT.
...THEN IT FALLS.

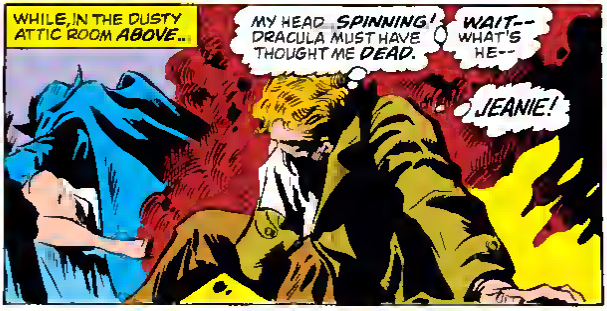

WHAT'S THIS?

A CRUCIFIX! IT FELL FROM THAT WINDOW..!
FRIENDS PERHAPS WE ARE TOO LATE!

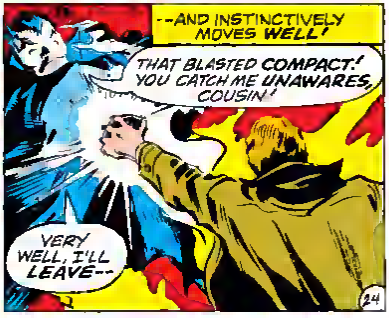
BOOTED FEET POUND MOSS-SLICKENED STONE, SHOULDERS SLAM GAINST WOODEN DOORS...
VOICES RAISED IN FURY, TORCHES FLICKERING AND DIVING IN THE BLACKNESS, THE VILLAGERS ENTER THE NIGHTBLACK CASTLE--

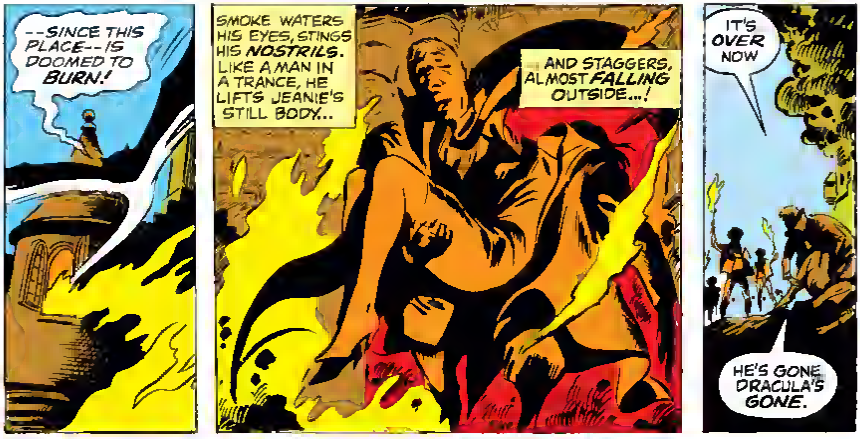

--AND, WITH MADDENED FRENZY--

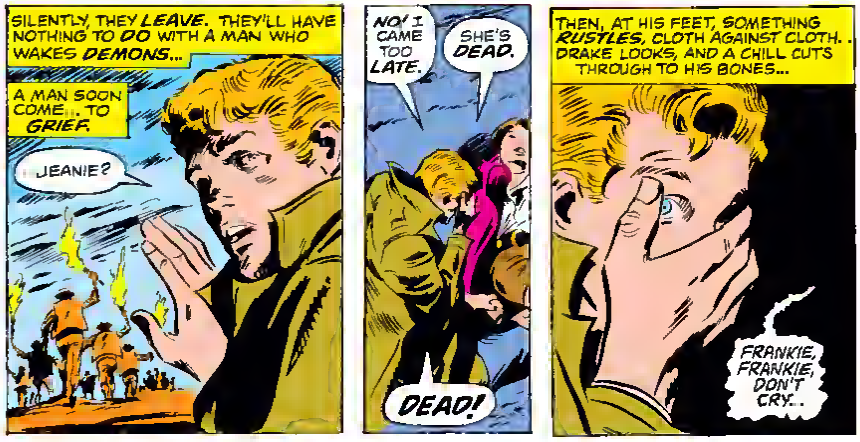
--PUT IT TO FLAME!

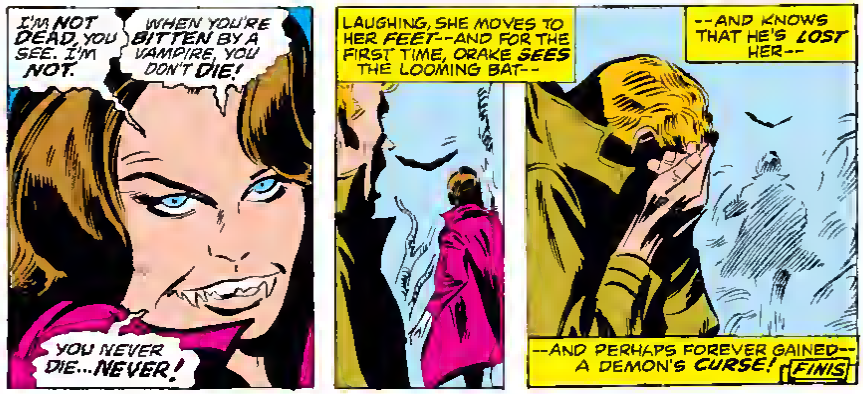

WHILE, IN THE DUSTY ATTIC ROOM ABOVE..
MY HEAD SPINNING! DRACULA MUST HAVE THOUGHT ME DEAD.
WAIT-- WHAT'S HE--
JEANIE!

HIS BODY MOVES BLINDLY, ALMOST WITHOUT THOUGHT--


--AND INSTINCTIVELY MOVES WELL!
THAT BLASTED COMPACT! YOU CATCH ME UNAWARES, COUSIN!
VERY WELL, I'LL LEAVE--


--SINCE THIS PLACE--IS DOOMED TO BURN!
SMOKE WATERS HIS EYES, STINGS HIS NOSTRILS. LIKE A MAN IN A TRANCE, HE LIFTS JEANIE'S STILL BODY...
...AND STAGGERS, ALMOST FALLING OUTSIDE...!
IT'S OVER NOW
HE'S GONE. DRACULA'S GONE.


SILENTLY, THEY LEAVE. THEY'LL HAVE NOTHING TO DO WITH A MAN WHO WAKES DEMONS...
A MAN SOON COME... TO GRIEF.
...JEANIE?
NO! I CAME TOO LATE.
SHE'S DEAD.
DEAD!
THEN, AT HIS FEET, SOMETHING RUSTLES, CLOTH AGAINST CLOTH. DRAKE LOOKS, AND A CHILL CUTS THROUGH TO HIS BONES...
FRANKIE, FRANKIE, DON'T CRY..


I'M NOT DEAD, YOU SEE. I'M NOT.
WHEN YOU'RE BITTEN BY A VAMPIRE, YOU DON'T DIE!
YOU NEVER DIE...NEVER!
LAUGHING, SHE MOVES TO HER FEET--AND FOR THE FIRST TIME, DRAKE SEES THE LOOMING BAT--
--AND KNOWS THAT HE'S LOST HER--
--AND PERHAPS FOREVER GAINED-- A DEMON'S CURSE!
FINIS